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Fischer Moshe. An early Byzantine settlement at Kh. Zikrin (Israel). A contribution to the archaeology of pilgrimage in the Holy Land. In: Actes du XIe congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne. Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève, Aoste, 21-28 septembre 1986. Rome : École Française de Rome, 1989. pp. 1787-1807. (Publications de l'École française de Rome, 123);

http://www.persee.fr/doc/efr_0000-0000_1989_act_123_1_3565

Document généré le 16/06/2016

MOSHE FISCHER

AN EARLY BYZANTINE SETTLEMENT AT KH. ZIKRIN (ISRAEL)

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PILGRIMAGE IN THE HOLY LAND*

FOREWORD

Ancient Israel was one of the most attractive goals for Christian pilgrimage from the real beginnings of Christianity, as it is attested and emphasized by the rich pilgrim literature starting from the 2. cent. AD and lasting up to the end of the 19. cent[1]. History of archaeology in the Holy Land was deeply determinated by biblical and new-testamental searching involving political and military interfering[2]. However, various aspects of ancient pilgrimage are still less known, particularly those concerning the physical conditions which enabled pilgrimage itself. Among them are issues such as the economic background of

* This paper represents an enlarged form of my contribution submitted to the XIth Congress of Christian Archaeology, in September 1986. Its preparation was enabled and facilitated by an Alexander von Humboldt-Fellowship and a stay at the University of Constance, Germany during August-September 1987. I am indebted to Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schuller, Head of the Department of Ancient History at the University of Constance, Germany for his help and hospitality.

[1] For some collections concerning this material see : J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, Warminster, 1977; T. Tobler, *Bibliographia geographica Palaestinae*, 1867, repr. Amsterdam, 1964; R. Röhricht, *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestinae*, 1890, repr. Jerusalem, 1963.

[2] M. Magnusson, *The Archaeology of the Bible Lands*, London, 1977; N. A. Silberman, *Digging for God and Country. Exploration, Archaeology and Secret Struggle for the Holy Land 1799-1917*, New York, 1982. See also Barbara W. Tuchmann, *Bible and Sword*, New York, 1956, ch. XIII : The rush for the Holy Land, p. 239-251.

Persée creative commons

smaller settlements and their agricultural installations, pilgrim roads and their establishments, the typology and chronology of churches and monasteries. Although some of these aspects were revealed by written sources[3], the research of their physical background was rather neglected. This situation is due to some factors, partly objective, partly subjective.

One of them is the bad preservation of this kind of sites dating from the early Byzantine period. In spite of the fact that these sites are easily to be surveyed, it is quite difficult to point out their structures and to attribute them to historical phases. And this is especially due to the fact that they were intensively reused during the later antiquity up to the modern times.

On the other side, research has dealt particularly with monumental structures such as churches, monasteries, thermae, a.o. thus neglecting the *"realia"* of daily life of smaller settlements, houses, industrial structures, agricultural installations, a.s.o.[4]. Archaeology of the last three decades, Israeli archaeology included, dedicated itself more and more with these "pejorative" aspects. A long seria of such "anonymous" settlements were and are being excavated recently[5]. The site of Kh. Zikrin presented within this paper is an example of this kind of settlements.

THE SITE

The site of Kh. Zikrin (map reference 1466. 1634, according to Israeli grid, fig. 1) is situated atop one of the hills (ca. 160 m above sea-

[3] As compiled and interpretated by M. Avi-Yonah, *The Economics of Byzantine Palestine, Israel Exploration Journal*, 8, 1958, p. 39-51. See recently E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire. AD 312-460*, Oxford, 1982.

[4] As sharply pointed out by J. D. Eliot, *The Elusa Oikumene*, p. 160. See the rejections of M. Piccirillo, *Rural Settlements in Byzantine Jordan*, in : A. Hadidi (ed.), *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan II*, Amman-London, 1985, p. 261, emphasizing the importance of basilical and monastic remains. For these issues still unvaluable the pioneer and standard work of G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*, I-III, Paris, 1953-1958.

[5] Y. Tsafrir-Y. Hirschfeld, *The Church and the Mosaics at Horvat Berachot, Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 33, 1979, p. 291-326. Y. Magen-H. Hizmi, *The Monastery of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adumin, Qadmoniot*, 71/72, 1985, p. 62-92 (Hebr.); Y. Tsafrir-Y. Patrich, *Horvat Loya, Qadmoniot*, 71/72, 1985, p. 96-112 (Hebr.).

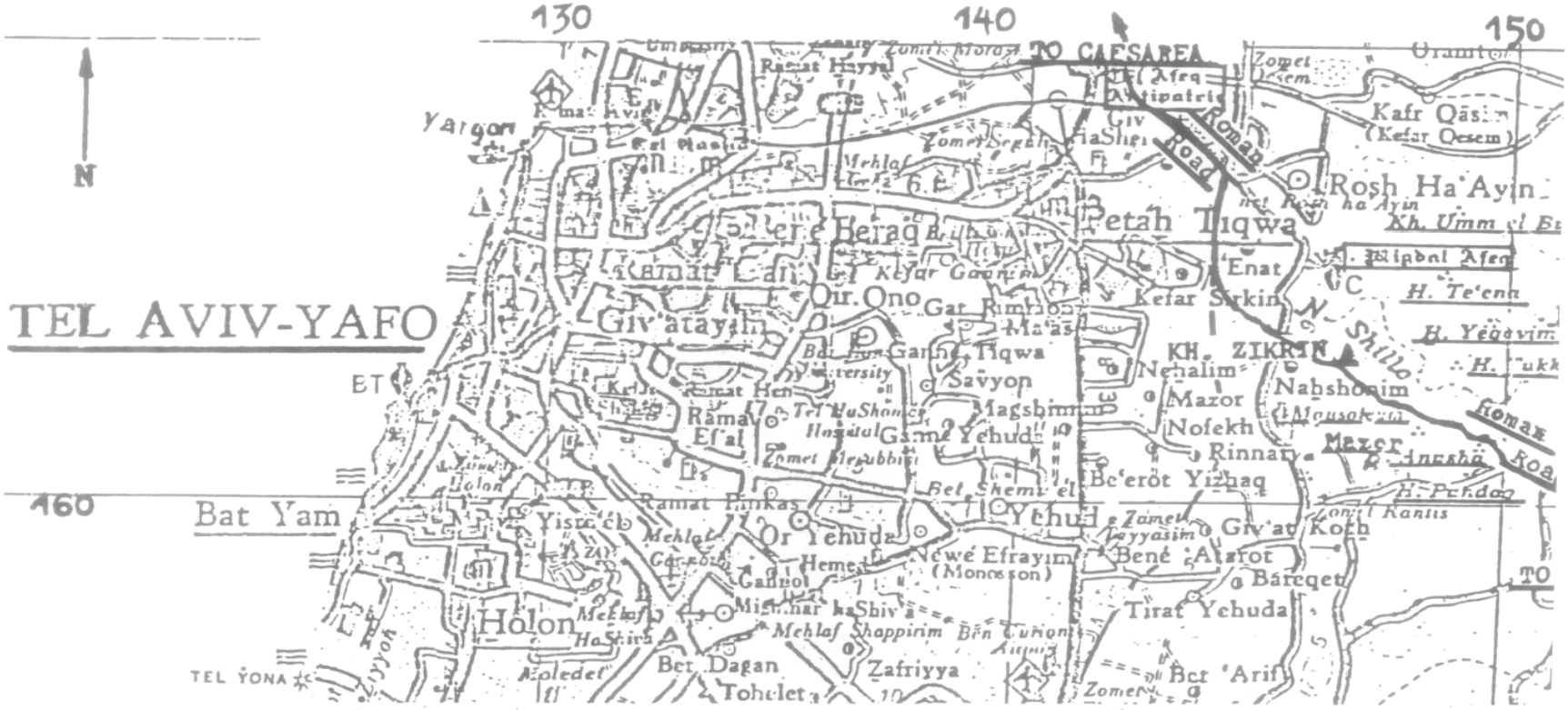

Fig. 1 – Kh. Zikrin. Location of the site.

level) which overlook the eastern basin of the Yarkon river, about 6 km southeast of Aphek-*Antipatris* and 1,5 km south of Majdal Yaba-Migdal Aphek. The site is situated close to the southern edge of Nahal Shillo which was the natural vein of the ancient road between Antipatris and Jerusalem, via Gophna, thus being obviously linked with the existence of this too[6].

Excavations carried out at Kh. Zikrin since 1982[7] revealed remains from five main periods: the *end of the Second Temple* period (1. cent. AD), the *early Byzantine* period (4.-7. cent. AD), *early Muslim* period (8.-10. cent. AD), the *Mamluk* period (13.-16. cent.) and the *Ottoman* period (17.-19. cent.).

The results of the excavations made it obvious that the site of Kh. Zikrin knew its maximal extension (about 30 dunam, i.e. about 8 acres) and its most flourishing situation during the early Byzantine period. In all excavated areas (fig. 2 – A, B, C, D, F, G) remains from this period were prevalent and they represent the subject of our paper.

In order to provide a thorough excavation and research of such a site, the delimitation and the choice of the areas which had to be excavated were done according to their topography and to the analysis of airphotographies. Thus area A and C which are on the top of the hill (called by us the "acropolis") are isolated topographically and were treated accordingly (fig. 3). Area F extends on a lower terrace occupy-

[6] The fragment of a milestone found in one of the southern walls of Kh. Zikrin seems to represent the archaeological proof for this. It probably marked the 4th mile from Antipatris on the road leading to Gophna and Jerusalem. For the place of Kh. Zikrin within the regional road-system see I. Roll-E. Ayalon, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 118, 1986, p. 113-134, map on p. 118, fig. 4.

[7] Until 1987 five seasons of excavations were carried out at the site on behalf of the Department of Classical Studies, Tel Aviv University, in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of Israel and with the support of "Pioneer Concrete Company". The author of this paper is director of the project and was and is actively helped by Dr. Arieh Kindler (numismatic advisor), Daphna Steiner-Katz, Enrietta Eliezer, Osi Shoshner (recorders), Barry Davies, Shmuel Giveon, Meir Nadav, Amir Feldstein, Eli Franko (area supervisors), Israel Segal (measurements), Rahel Graff (drawings), Yoram Weinberg (photographer) and Ronit Dagan (scientific assistant). For preliminary reports see: M. Fischer, *Excavations at Horvat Zikhrin*, *Qadmoniot*, 71/72, 1985, p. 112-121 (Hebr.); Idem, *Israel Exploration Journal*, 35, 1985, p. 194-198; Idem, *Revue Biblique*, 93, 1986, p. 269-276.

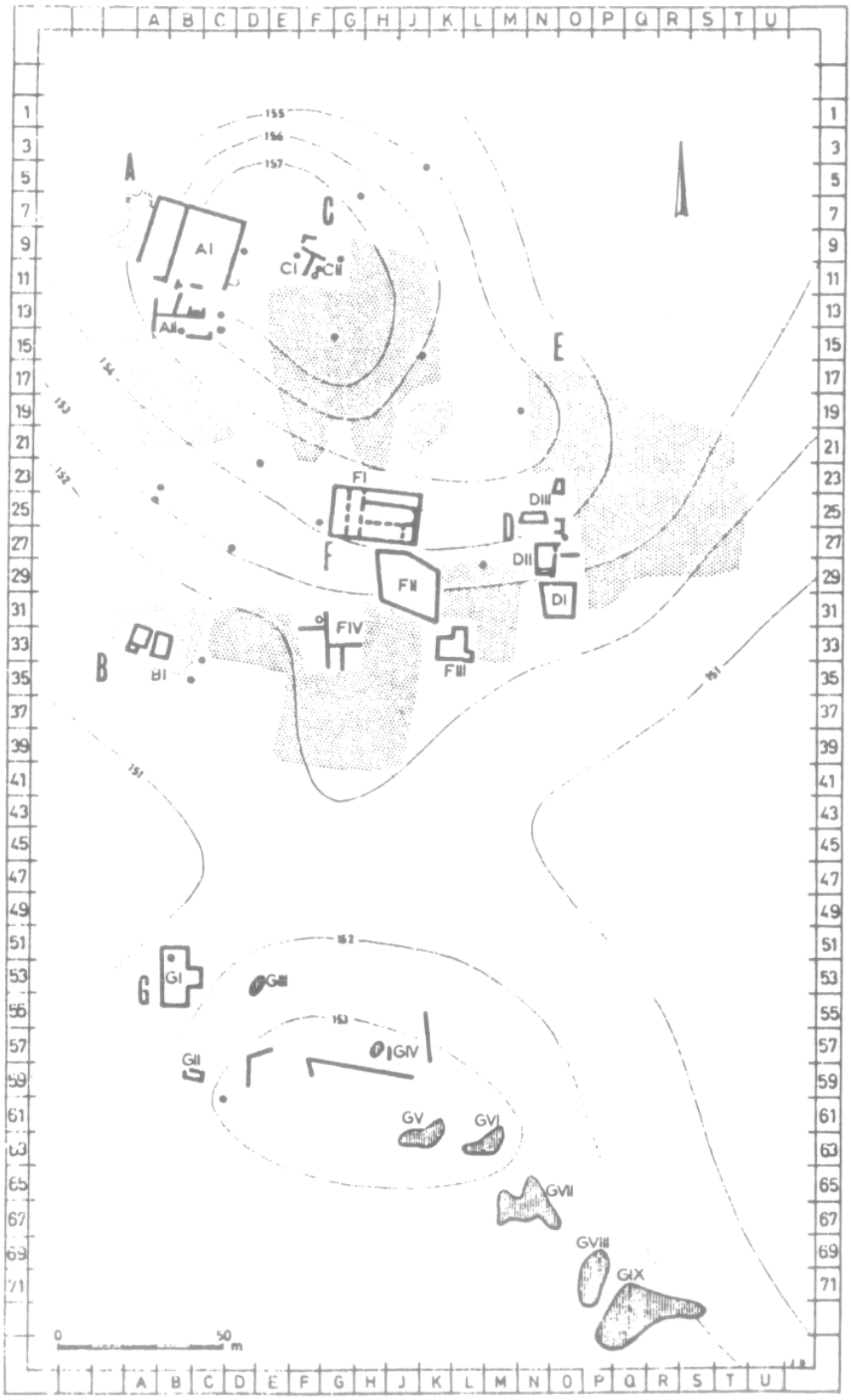

Fig. 2 – Kh. Zikrin. General plan of the site. Drawn by Y. Dekel.

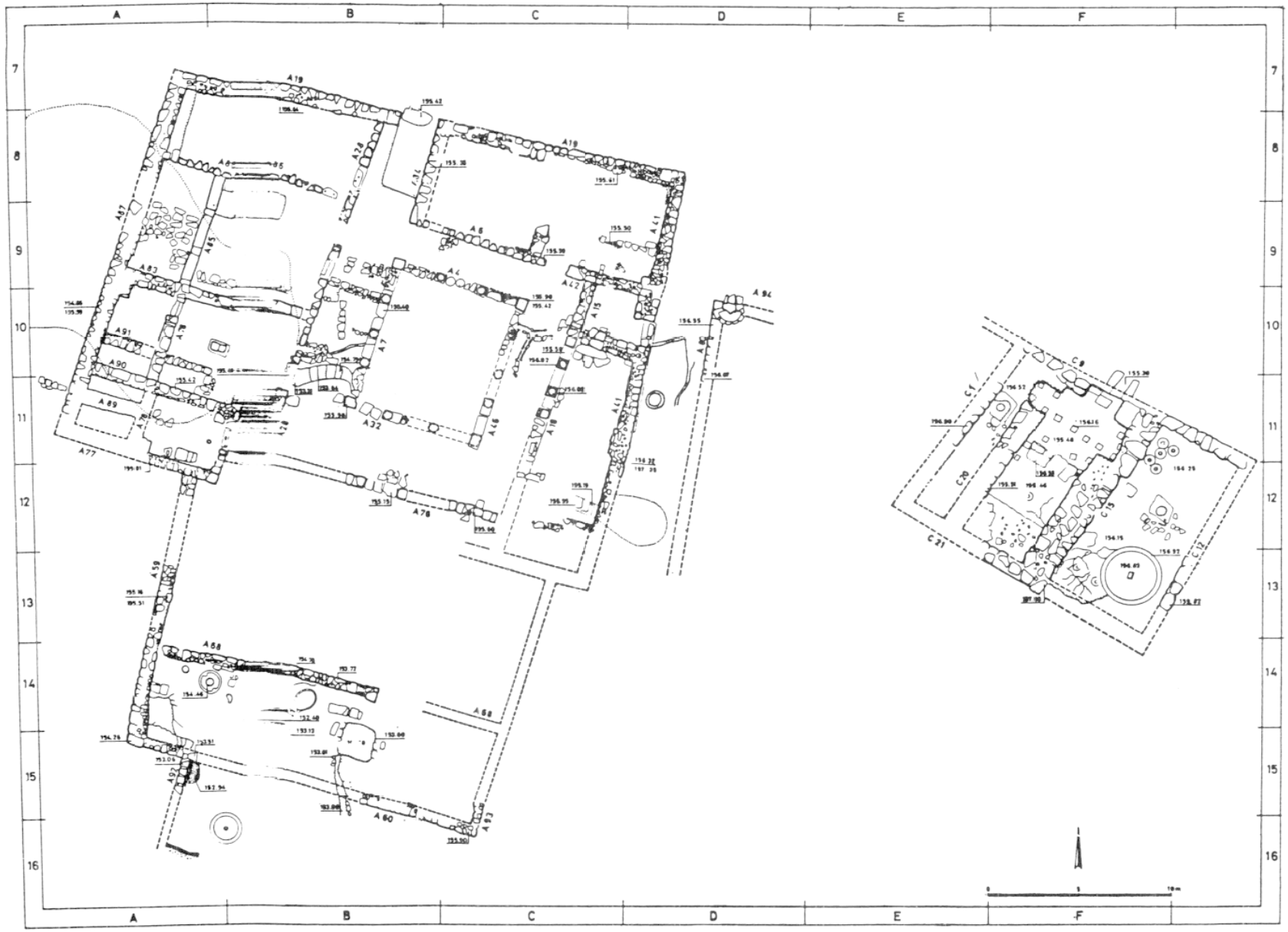

Fig. 3 – Kh. Zikrin. Plan of Area A (left) – the monastery – and area C (right) – the xenodocheion with the bathhouse and the oilfactory –. Drawn by Y. Dekel.

ing a broad strip of the site; areas B and D are situated on lower slopes, one to the south and the second to the east. Area G extends about 80 m south of the limits of the main hill representing probably an outskirt of the settlement; the existence of a large necropolis in this area seems to improve this consideration.

THE "ACROPOLIS" (areas A and C) (fig. 3)

In this area occur remains of a large monumental building, identified with a monastery and a large adjacent building containing a bathhouse and an oil factory, perhaps parts of a *xenodocheion*.

The monastery (fig. 4) extends over 800 squaremeters and consists of the following architectural units: a peristyle courtyard (9 × 8 m), which was surrounded by a stylobate bearing square corner pillars and columns. These were overspanned by arches as indicated by the large

Fig. 4 – Kh. Zikrin. The monastery. Looking south-east. Photogr. by M. Fischer.

number of archstones, headstones, imposts found in the debris of this structure. Composite capitals, partly with encarved crosses between the volutes, ornated the columns. Rooms were attached to the outer passages of the courtyard. To the north a large room with a mosaic floor is probably the refectory of the monastery. On the eastern side a fine *distylos in antis* entrance preserved *in situ* (fig. 4) and enabled the approach to a water cistern covered by a fine ashlar arch. A pottery drainpipe attached to the corner of the room enabled the rainwater to draw from the roofs. On the western side of the courtyard were about six rooms which were the cells of the monks (fig. 5). Cisterns and cellars practically surrounded the main building. From the western part of the courtyard five rock-cut steps led to a subterranean cistern and storage place. A large cistern with a plastered channel for collecting rainwater was uncovered in the southern part of the complex. Another cistern in the northern part of the building was connected to the refectory.

Fig. 5 – Kh. Zikrin. The monastery. Western part with the cells for the monks. Photogr. by M. Fischer.

A great number of industrial installations was uncovered around the main building but within the enclosure wall of the complex. A large oil factory was uncovered in the south of the area; it consists of a crushing and a pressing installation. Nearby a storeroom was uncovered containing remains of ca. 25 jars, 10 cooking vessels, juglets and glassvessels.

The inner division of the building, the great number of water installations and the industrial remains recall monasteries of the Byzantine period[8]. A number of finds are of Christian character, such as

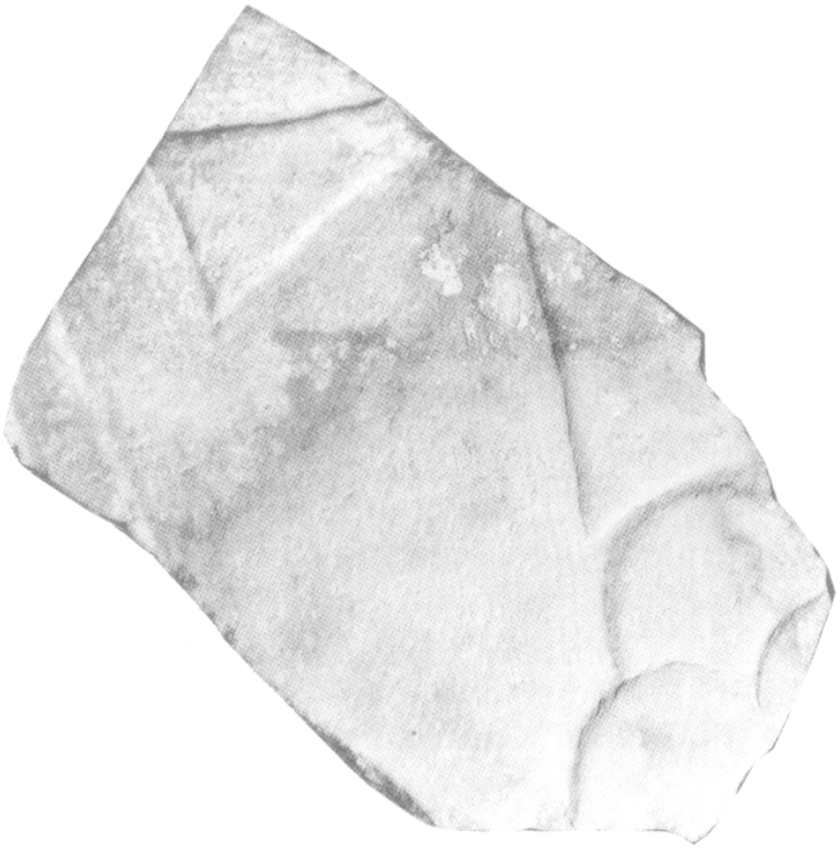

Fig. 6 – Kh. Zikrin. Fragment of the chancel-screen with the cross on the Golgotha. Photogr. by M. Weinberg.

[8] For plans and components see: *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, III (ed. M. Avi-Yonah-E. Stern), s.v. *Monasteries* (R. Cohen), p. 876-885, especially p. 879 with the plan of the complex at Bir el-Qutt which is similar to that described by us. Cf. also Tchalenko (*op. cit.* supra, n. 4), I, p. 19-20, 162-182; P. Papaevangelu, *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, IV, Stuttgart, 1982, s.v. *Klosterarchitektur*, col. 102-136.

composite capitals with carved crosses (mentioned above), "Late Roman" pottery with stamped crosses and other Christian symbols. A marble relief depicting a cross standing on Golgotha (fig. 6), reused in a later pavement, may have belonged to the chancel screen of the church of the settlement (see below) or may have been part of the private chapel of the monastery, which was not discovered.

About 30 m east of the monastery remains of a large building containing a bathhouse and an oil factory were uncovered (area C). The area around the oilpress was used as a storage place : five storage-jars were found *in situ* sunken into a hard-packed floor of mortar and stones.

It is possible that this large building with its special units (bathhouse, oil factory, storeroom for olives and oil) served the monastery and its visitors as a *xenodocheion*[9].

THE CHURCH AND THE RESIDENTIAL AREA (area F)

This area is situated about 70 m southeast of the "acropolis". It represents the largest concentration of buildings revealed until today at Kh. Zikrin. This large official and residential area extends over about 3 500 m^2 consisting of four main complexes, from north to south : a church (F/I), a residential area (F/II), a bathhouse (F/III) and dwellings and industrial remains (F/IV).

The *church* (F/I) is a typical basilical building (fig. 7-8). It consists of an atrium (15,3 × 5 m), a narthex (15,3 × 5 m) and the basilica itself (15,3 × 18 m). The narthex could be entered from the south and from the north; the atrium could be entered only from the narthex through a central doorway. Three doorways lead from the narthex to the basilica. This is divided into a central nave and two lateral aisles. At the eastern end of the central nave of the basilica an apse is incorporated in the wall. The *pastophoria* (*diaconicon* and *prothesis*) lie on either end of the apse. In the center of the *prothesis* (the northern room) is a cross-shaped stonestructure, perhaps the foundation of a

[9] For xenodocheion or pandocheion as parts of monasteries see : *Pauly-Wissowa Realenzyclopädie des klassischen Altertums*, IX, A, 2, cols. 1487-1503 (O. Hiltbrunner). For their economic functions and their components see Tchalenko (supra, n. 4), I, p. 19-20, 212; 27-28 (with therma); 21-22 (with bazar).

baptismal basin. This was clearly later implanted into the floor, probably during the same time when the atrium was divided into two parts. Then the western part continued to be used as an atrium (with the water cistern) and the eastern part became the narthex of the church[10].

Fragments of mosaic floors were discovered in almost all excavated parts of the church. They bear stylised floral and geometric motives: medallions, rhombs, diagonal lines, guilloche, small crosscs (diagonically arranged) (fig. 9). In the eastern end of the carpet of the northern aisle of the basilica a Greek inscription was included in the mosaic floor (fig. 4). The inscription measures 1.70 × 0.70 m and consists of three lines, reading:

Χρ[ισ]τὲ βοήθι	Christ, help
τῇ δοῦλη σοῦ	your slave
Ἀθανασίαν (*sic!*)	Athanasia(n)

A second inscription was included in the mosaic floor, 2.40 m east of the previous inscription and had probably the same formula as the other, which was quite usual in the 5th cent. AD and afterwards[11]. Letters of a third inscription were uncovered in the mosaic floor of the narthex, opposite to its southern entrance. According to these letters it is possible to reconstruct the title *presbyteros* and the inscription thus reflects the ecclesiastic organization of that time[12].

A large *residential area* (F/II) extends south of the church and is separated from this by a plastered path (about 2.50 m wide). This area

[10] For liturgical changes in 6. cent. AD basilicas see A. Ovadiah, *Corpus of the Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land*, Bonn, 1970; Idem, *Two Notes on the Early Byzantine Complex at Kursi, Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 109, 1977, p. 123-124 (the changing of the prothesis into a photisterion, i.e. a baptisterium). Also to this issue A. Ovadiah-C. Gomez de Silva, *Supplementum to the Corpus of the Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land*, III, *Levant*, 16, 1984, p. 152. For a minimalizing attitude to these changes see Y. Blomme, *Inscriptions grecques à Kursi et Amwas, Revue Biblique*, 87, 1980, p. 406, n. 16.

[11] For this kind of formula see: C. M. Kaufmann, *Handbuch der altchristlichen Epigraphik*, Freiburg i. Br., 1917, p. 142, 283. Inscriptions like these occur frequently all over the eastern world, e.g. Tchalenko (*op. cit.* supra, n. 4), III, n° 30 a; E. Littmann, *Semitic Inscriptions*, Leiden, 1949, n° 135; A. Negev, *Greek Inscriptions from the Negev*, Jerusalem, 1984.

[12] Kaufmann (*op. cit.* supra, n. 11), p. 254-257. See also *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, XI, San Francisco, 1967, p. 745-747.

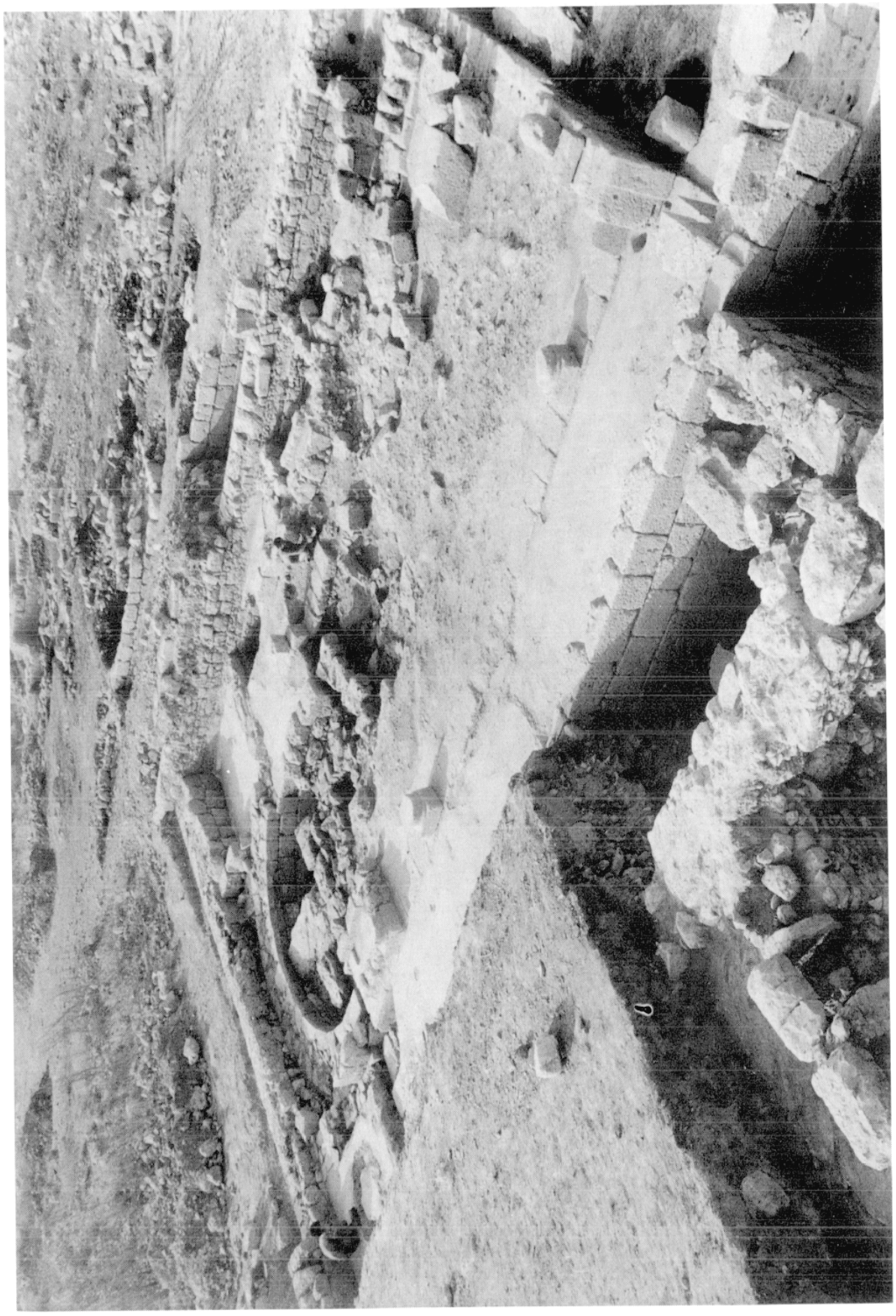

Fig. 7 – Kh. Zikrin. The church, looking to the Southeast.

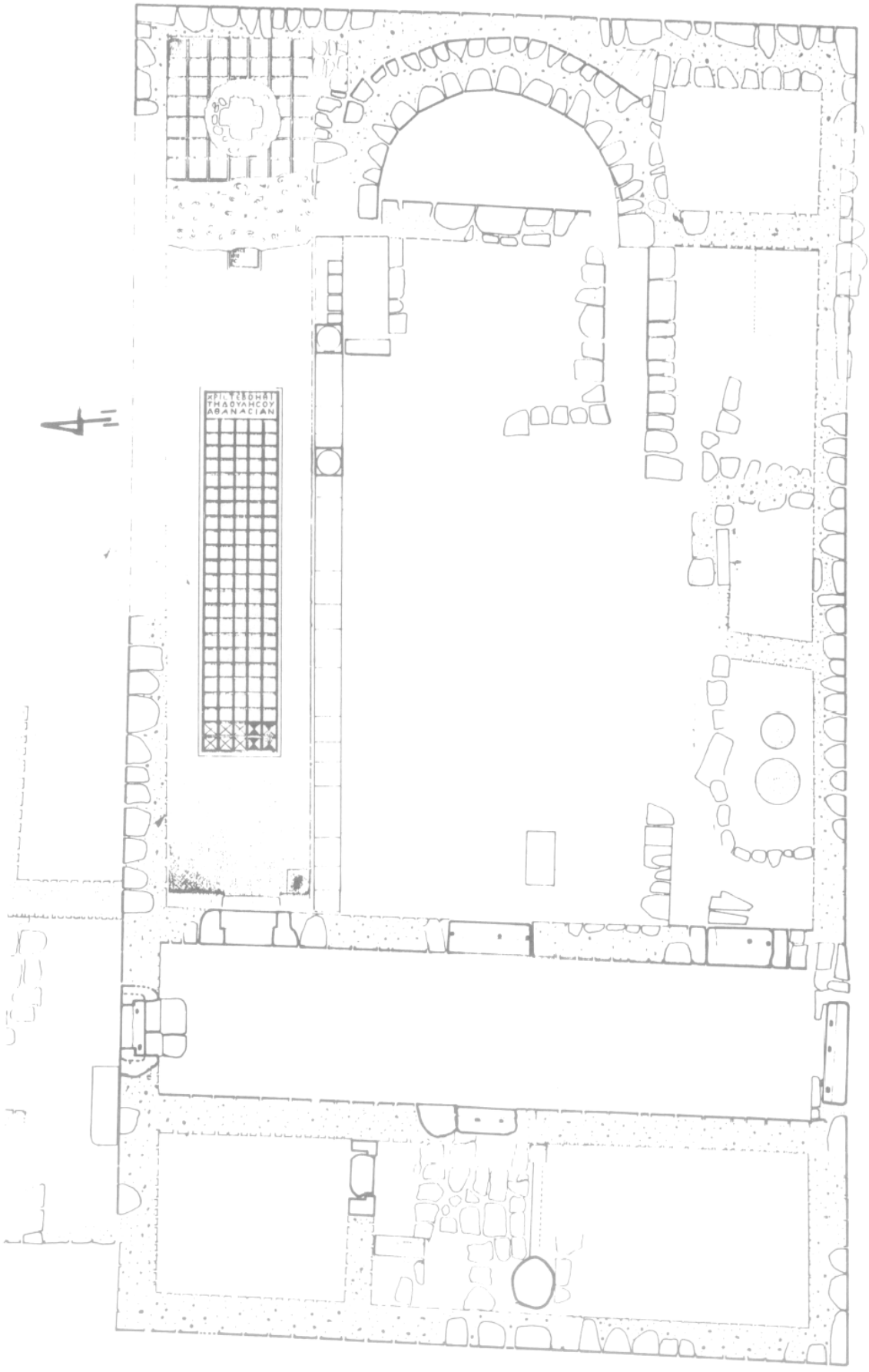

Fig. 8 – Kh. Zikrin. Plan of the basilica. Drawn by Y. Segal and R. Graff.

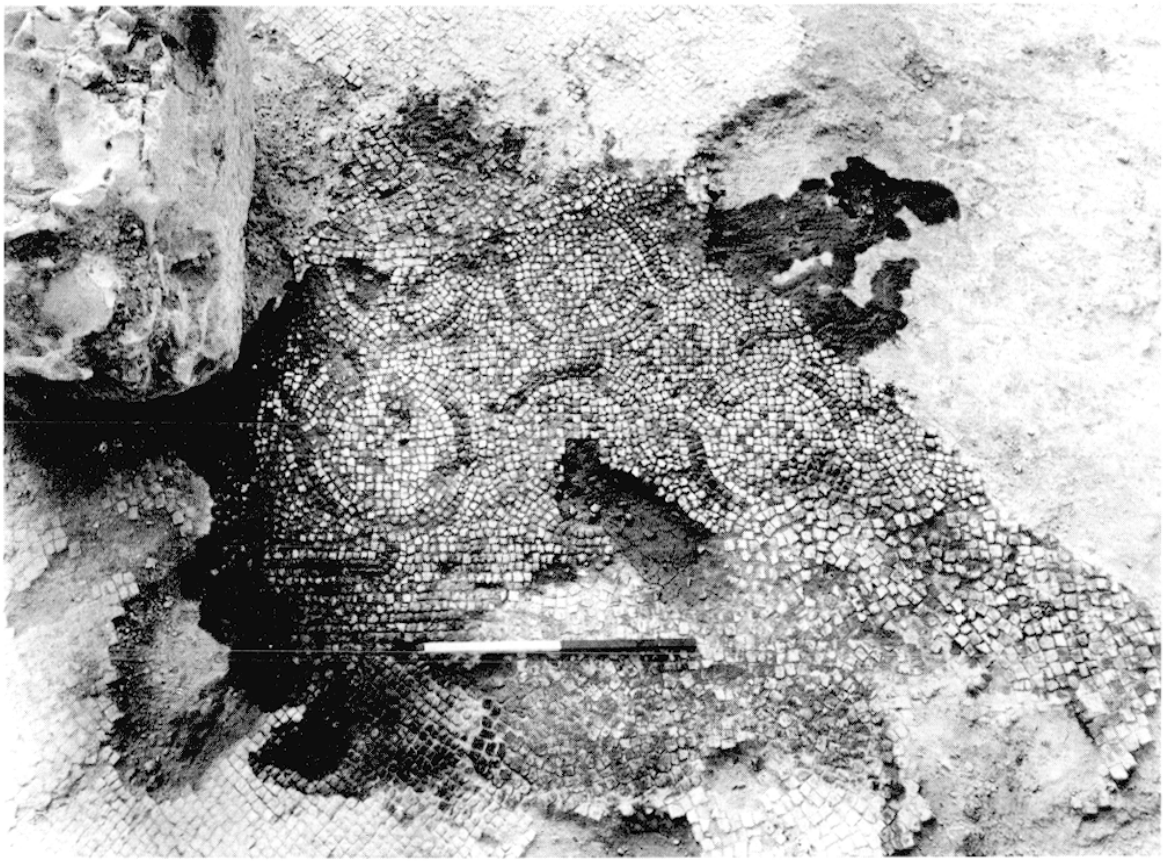

Fig. 9 – Kh. Zikrin. Fragments of mosaic floor. Photogr. by Y. Weinberg.

covers about 400 sq. m. and in its last phase it was composed of two large buildings (15 × 15 m and 12 × 7 m) joint one to the other. The larger building was arranged around a courtyard with a water cistern. Both of the buildings were divided into several rooms. Storage rooms surrounded the northern and eastern sides of the complex.

The *bathhouse* (F/III) (15 × 10 m) lies in the south-eastern corner of area F. This is the second bathhouse uncovered at Kh. Zikrin (for the first see, above, area C) but it is larger than the previous one. It is composed of the usual components of Roman-Byzantine bathhouses; yet the hypocaust of its caldarium is unusually high: the distance between the lower and the upper level is about 1.50 m and is based on *suspensurae* built partly of stone and partly of bricks. Air circulation between the *caldarium* and the *tepidarium* was assured by the doorway and two lateral openings all embedded with bricks. The building was roofed with tiles, as demonstrated by the large amounts ot tiles found in the area. Water was supplied by a large rock-cut cistern.

Dwellings and industrial installations (F/IV) covered the southwestern part of area F. They consist of rooms and courtyards ending to the south in a large courtyard and a cistern. One of the smaller courtyards served as an oil factory, composed of a crushing and a pressing installation.

According to the different remains of this large area it seems quite obvious that its plan was elaborated during one period. This can be demonstrated by the existence of several parallel lines in the location of the walls of the different structures described above, of similar building methods in almost all the structures and by the finds which occur within the structures. Coins and pottery found in the foundations of these structures, mainly a small hoard of approx. 40 coins dating from the period of AD 340-380 offer a *terminus post quem* of the erection of the structures. It is noteworthy that the same building methods and similar small finds occured in the structures of the "acropolis", mainly in the monastery. Therefore it seems quite obvious that both the main structure on the "acropolis" and the main structures of area F were erected at the same time, during the 5. cent. AD. Changes which occured in the inner division of the church (see above), additions made in the southern structures of area F and the structures of area C seem to have been done during the 6. cent. AD, as revealed by coins, pottery and glass.

INDUSTRIAL AREAS OF THE SITE

In addition to the three official and rich residential areas of Kh. Zikrin presented above (areas A, C and F), several features of economic and industrial interest were uncovered in three further areas: B, D and G. In almost all of them occur wine presses combined with oil-factories as it was quite usual in the villageous economy of the Byzantine period[13]. Their main development can be dated in the 6.-7, cent. AD.

One of these industrial areas lies in the south-western corner of the site (area B). It has a large building composed of a winepress and a

[13] Tchalenko (*op. cit.* supra, n. 4), II, Plans CXVIII, CXIX, CXX; I. Roll-E. Ayalon, *Two Large Wine Presses in the Red Soil Region of Israel, Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 113, 1981, p. 123-124.

large courtyard where remains of oil presses and large water cisterns were uncovered.

Another area – area D – extends in the southern edge of the site. It contains a wine press – perhaps one of the largest wine presses known until today in Israel – and an oil factory consisting of a crushing installation (found *in situ*) and a pressing area.

The wine press (fig. 9) comprises two large treading surfaces, a small drainage pit for sediments and two large collecting cisterns, one of them rectangular and the second round. Both cisterns have central round pits for sediments. All the floors of the winery are made of white mosaic with large *tesserae*. Its storage capacity was about 40.000 litres in both cisterns.

A dwelling house lies between the winery and the oil factory. Several rooms arranged around a courtyard were uncovered, some with a mosaic floor consisting of white *tesserae*. The house belongs to the early Byzantine period and was intensively reused during the early Muslim period.

Fig. 10 – Kh. Zikrin. Area D. The large winepress. Looking north. Photogr. by M. Fischer.

Area G lies outside the main site, about 80 m south of it and probably was not an organic part of the village. It contains another concentration of industrial and agricultural installations. It is possible to distinguish here the walls of a large farmhouse, a pool, cisterns, remains of oil presses and a wine-press. In addition to all these features area G contains one of the largest *necropoleis* of the site.

The wine press, which was entirely excavated, is of a greater interest. Beside the usual components of wine presses in the Byzantine period (as it was described above for the other wine presses of Kh. Zikrin), this wine press has some further features arranged around the central treading surface: two small vaulted chambers lie on the southern side of the surface and two additional square rooms lie on the eastern side of the treading surface. It may be assumed that this kind of wine press was used by various groups or families of peasants who put the grapes accordingly on the surfaces of those different additional chambers. The wine presses uncovered within the village of Kh. Zigrin do not have these additional features. Therefore it seems possible to assume that their final product (the wine) belonged to one owner – perhaps the monastery –[14].

Area G contains also one of the largest *necropoleis* of the site. Actually Kh. Zikrin is surrounded on at least three sides by cemeteries (on the north, the east and the south). Below the building of the monastery on the "acropolis" (area A), in an area north of it and in area G, several burial caves with *loculi* belonging to the 1. cent. AD were recorded. Two large cemeteries belonging to the Byzantine period were surveyed on the eastern and southern outskirts of the settlement. In area G nine groups of rock cut burials were recorded. All the tombs have a rock cut shaft and two *arcosolia*, one on each long side of the inner walls of the shaft. This kind of tomb is typical for the third-fourth centuries AD onwards[15].

[14] This issue needs further surveys and excavations and an adequate interpretation of literary and archaeological evidence.

[15] This kind of tombs occurs in areas linked with sites which can be dated in the Later Roman and Byzantine periods as it was revealed in surveys (partly published by the Archaeological Survey of Israel) such as those carried out by the author and his team and by the team of Yitzhaq Beit-Arieh (see below, note 20) in the area of the Eastern Basin of the Yarqon and in surveys carried out for the project "Ancient Roads from Jaffa to Jerusalem" (see below, note 22). Yet the dating of different types of tombs still arises

CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological evidence at Kh. Zikrin reveals the existence of two main complexes : a monastery with its adjacent features on the more or less isolated "acropolis" and a village on the lower slopes of the hill. It was impossible to point out the limits between these two structures but the differentiation between them according to their different topographical position represents a limit for itself.

Several archaeological finds such as coins, inscriptions, architectural details and pottery enable us to date the erection of both of these complexes in the 5. cent. AD. Other structures, such as the large wine presses and a part of the dwellings, were added during the 6. cent. AD, which was the peak of the development in Byzantine Palestine, especially during the reign of Justinian.

It is noteworthy that the site was erected along one of the main Roman roads leading from Caesarea through Antipatris and Gophna to Jerusalem. This fact is not incidental : as in many other cases earlier Roman roads represented the framework for the later pilgrim roads, sometimes leading even to the appearance of religious sites[16]. Combining the different kinds of evidence presented here it seems adequate to state that the erection of a monastery near and almost together with a small settlement (containing a church, larger houses, a bathhouse,

a great number of question-marks, especially because of the lacking of structural connection between them and other complexes which are easier to be dated such as houses, installations, storerooms, a.o. To these we can add the fact that in many cases the tombs were and still are robbed. According to these facts it is rather astonishing to see recent attempts to date this kind of tombs almost strictly in the Persian period, see : H.-P. Kuhnen, *Nordwest-Palästina in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit : Bauten und Gräber im Karmelgebiet* (*Quellen und Forschungen zur prähistorischen und provinzialrömischen Archäologie*, Bd. 1), Weinheim, 1987, p. 48-69; p. 118, n. 227 : "... Schaftgräber mit Grablegen in seitlichen Aushöhlungen eine allein oder doch hauptsächlich in der Perserzeit geläufige Erscheinung sind".

[16] J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, Jerusalem-Warminster, 1981, p. 15 : "In practice the places visited ... are usually selected because adequate roads lead to them. Roman roads provided a network which made it possible to travel widely and the maps show that most of the places regularly visited by fourth-century pilgrims were on or very close to a road". See also R. Roussel, *Les pélerinages* (*Que sais-je?* n° 666), Paris, 1972, p. 1-42.

industrial installations) along an existent main road during the 5. cent. AD (perhaps even during the early 5. cent. AD) represents the starting point of a combined "pilgrimage complex": the monastery as an administrative and religious center of the place providing also the safety for the pilgrims[17] and the village as the framework of the current working of the fields and the "industrial" exploitation of the agricultural products[18]. Both the monastery and the village were *created* together like two counterparts: one for thc attraction and safeguarding of the pilgrims, the second as material base of the first. Both of them developed and extended during the 6.-7. cent. AD as result of the flourishing of pilgrimage. During this time several changes occured within different complexes, as revealed by the excavations, such as the later addition of the narthex and the baptismal basin within the church, the erection of adjacent complexes of the monastery and the central official quarter (area F) and of several new industrial installations, including changes in building methods and in the character of the small finds could be observed. Concluding this point, it is possible to state that we deal with the creation of a combined complex in order to fulfill the pilgrimage policy to the Holy Land and which developed ulteriourly according to the flourishing of the latter[19].

[17] Tchalenko (supra, n. 4), I, p. 396-398. For the centralized policy of safety to the travelers (pilgrims), including the erection of fortified monasteries and of xenodocheia see recently: B. Isaac, *Bandits in Judaea and Arabia, Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 88, 1984, p. 200-201. That even hostels were not always safe in a time of brigantism is revealed *inter alia* by an inscription giving details on a murder which occured in a *pandocheion* (*pondocheion* in the inscription), Tchalenko (*op. cit.* supra, n° 4), III, n° 34, p. 31-32.

[18] For villages as a source of working hands for the covents, Tchalenko (*op. cit.* supra, n. 4), I, p. 176-177, 198. For the relationship and the juridical status of adjacent villages and monasteries, see Y. Dan, *On the Ownership of the Land of the Village of Thavatha in the Byzantine Period, Scripta Classica Israelica*, 5, 1979/80, p. 258-262. A fortified complex of ca. 18 dunam (about 4, 5 acres) was uncovered the last years at Kursi, on the eastern border of the Sea Genezareth: V. Tzaferis-D. Urman, *Excavations at Kursi, Qadmoniot*, 22, 1973, p. 62-64 (Hebrew). In my opinion it is another example of combined monastery and civilian settlement. On the issue if Kursi was a monastery or not see the dispute Ovadiah (*op. cit.* supra, n. 10), p. 123-124 (opposing to the statement of the excavators that it is a monastery because of the large size of the complex) and Blomme (*op. cit.* supra, n. 10), p. 404-405, who emphasizes the fact that the *hegumen*, i.e. the head of the monastery, is explicitely mentioned in the inscription of the photisterion.

[19] Avi-Yonah (*op. cit.* supra, n. 3), p. 45-46; Tchalenko (*op. cit.* supra, n. 4), II, plans

Carried out as a "palaeo-environmental" research the excavation of Kh. Zikrin tries to point out the character of the structures according to their place within their topographical, archaeological and geo-historical context. Different surveys carried out in the neighbourhood of Kh. Zikrin extending over an area of ca. 100 sq. km revealed the existence of a large number of sites having similar features to those of Kh. Zikrin. Their architectural remains and the fact that a part of them are called *dir (deir)* (in Arabic : monastery, covent) seem to enable the statement that they belong also to the same group of sites such as Kh. Zikrin[20].

From this point of view we have to keep in mind that Kh. Zikrin is part of the surroundings of *Antipatris* and particularly for the history of this town the flourishing of settlements during the Byzantine period seems to be of a greater importance than usually mentioned : the town of Antipatris was probably completely destroyed during the earthquake of AD 419 and never recovered from this disaster, as it was revealed by archaeological evidence provided by the excavations carried out at the site during the last 15 years[21]. It seems that the gap produced by the lacking of a central town in this area was filled with a great number of smaller settlements, dispersed all over the region. This process occured in a period when generally a great number of settlements were erected along the pilgrim roads and in their environs[22]. Excavations at

CII, CVII, CXXI, CXXII : different phases of development of villages in the 3.-6. cent. AD. It is of some interest to note these reciproc influences in what concerns the road system, thus Hunt (*op. cit.* supra, n. 3), p. 60, n. 41 "... Egeria's itinerary contributes nothing distinctively Christian to their movements", whilst during the time of the pilgrim of Piacenza, the 6. cent. AD "the organization of the route had taken on a more obviously Christian character"; e.g. the site of *Magdalum* (mentioned both by *Anton. Placent. Itin.* 41 and by *Egeriae Itin.* 7,4) has in the 6. cent. AD a church and two xenodocheia "*propter transeuntes*".

[20] The main survey in the region was carried out by a team headed by Dr. Yitzhak Beit-Arieh from the Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University. The map of Beit-Arieh's survey shows clearly a massive concentration of sites along the existant Roman road leading from Antipatris to Gophna. In almost all of them Byzantine remains are prevalent.

My thanks are going to my colleague Dr. Yitzhak Beit-Arieh who kindly permitted me to use his material. This will be published soon by the Archaeological Survey of Israel.

[21] *Israel Exploration Journal*, 27, 1977, p. 55.

[22] A similar situation have been revealed in surveys carried out along the two main

Kh. Zikrin and their combination with the results of palaeo-environmental research both in the area of the site and in other regions seem to reflect the economic outline of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land enabling to point out development and changes which occured in various structures of the settlements as a result of the official policy of pilgrimage to the Holy Land and as an influence of pilgrimage itself.

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roads leading from Jaffa to Jerusalem, that *via Emmaus* and that *via Bethoron*. From 120 surveyed sites about 90 show prevalent Byzantine remains, about 60% of the sites became settlements probably only during the Byzantine period. The results of these surveys and researches will be published soon in M. Fischer, B. Isaac and I. Roll, *The Ancient Roads from Jaffa to Jerusalem* (*British Archaeological Reports*, Oxford).